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ABSTRACT

A study (one of a series) sought to identify interpersonal events related to implicit communication. Implicit communication is defined as nonverbal behavior which serves to transmit "subintended" information. The study explored whether interpersonal roles which account for part of the process of nonverbal communication (and which were identified in previous studies) could be taught to naive subjects. Two student "models," one male and one female, were taught eight interpersonal roles consisting of nonverbal behaviors ranging from very dominant and very nice to very weak and very "nasty." Ten male and 10 female students from a small private university viewed both of the models' presentations of all eight interpersonal roles and rated them with the Interpersonal Check List and a version of the Semantic Differential. Results showed that not only can nonverbal displays be described, they can be taught so that naive students can portray the behaviors accurately. Furthermore, results generally were consistent across gender lines. (Three tables are included.) (SG)

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NONVERBAL PORTRAYAL OF INTERPERSONAL ROLES

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The present study is one in a series of studies (York, Bedard, and Colindres, 1984, York, Scruggs and Shaker, 1986, York, Wilderman and Hardy, 1988) in which we have attempted to identify interpersonal events related to implicit communication. We use the term implicit communication as did Mehrabian (1972) to mean "nonverbal" behavior which serves to transmit "subintended" information. In the preceding studies the first author served as the model for the nonverbal behavior said to represent the eight interpersonal roles described by Leary (1957) and Cooper, Adams, Dickson, and York (1975). The focus for the present study turns on one issue, if large unit interpersonal roles account for part of the process of implicit communication, a conclusion of earlier work, then such roles ought to be able to be taught to naive subjects. It was our expectation that a reasonably well defined training procedure would allow naive subjects, one male and one female, to learn to nonverbally display the eight interpersonal roles described by Leary (1957) and as portrayed in the York, et al. 1988 study.

Method:

Materials (the eight nonverbal displays for two models).

One male and one female student were selected to learn eight interpersonal roles (AP, NO, LM, JK, HI, DE, FG, BC) cited in York et al. 1988 page 736. First, models were to learn schematic representations of these interpersonal roles. They were told that the interpersonal roles varied on two dimensions; dominance and affect. The (AP) role was

described as very dominant and very nice. The (LM) role was described as neither dominant or submissive but very, very nice. The (JK) role was described as somewhat nice but rather weak. The (HI) role was described as somewhat nasty and very weak. The (FG) role was described as weak and very nasty. The (DE) role was described as neither dominant nor submissive but very nasty and finally the (BC) role was described as somewhat nasty and dominant.

Then the role models viewed the eight interpersonal roles as portrayed by the first author. They were asked to comment on the displays and to focus on how closely they fit with the model. Then the models were asked to evaluate a series of internal sets with respect to the eight displays: (AP) - "We here at General Motors" (C.E.O.), (NO) - "Boy Scout Troup Leader", (LM) - "Prototypical Mother", (JK) - "Clinging Vine", (HI) - "a Whiner, Moaner, and Complainer", (FG) - "Rebellious Delinquent", (DE) - "Tough Cop", and (BC) - "Arrogant Texan".

In addition, the models were given specific directions concerning some nonverbal behaviors thought to represent each interpersonal role. For (AP) the models were asked to sit straight forward, chin slightly raised, arm movements to be initially gentle but used to emphasize each point and movement to be increased during presentation. For (NO) the models were asked to be very energetic and very positive with "a lot of arm movement". For (LM) the models were asked "to

be lovable" and to smile a lot with subtle movements including some up and down head nodding. For (JK) the models were asked to drop shoulders and look up, with their eyes, (chin down) towards the camera. For (HI) the models were asked to "whine, moan, bitch and complain" but non verbally. In addition they were asked to lean forward with shoulders dropped and corners of lips down. for (FG) a lopsided smile of "contempt" was described and modeled, also the models were told to lower one shoulder as they conveyed skepticism. For (DE) the models were told "to stare hard" and to clench their jaw. For (BC) the models were asked to "talk down" to someone and to "be superior and pompous". They were also given a video tape of the original nonverbal displays and asked to go home and practice them in front of a mirror.

Finally the models were coached throughout the eight interpersonal roles during the videotaping sessions, by first and second authors in the present study. No more than three trials were allowed during the final videotaping sessions. Each display was approximately 45 seconds in duration.

Procedure

Ten male and 10 female subjects, ages 18-22 were selected at a small private university. All subjects viewed both the male model and female model's presentation of all eight interpersonal roles. All subjects rated these eight nonverbal displays with the Interpersonal Check List and our version of the Semantic Differential (York, et al. 1988).

Results

To determine the probability of the actual hits and misses achieved, a binomial expansion was computed (Cameron, 1971). Hits were scored if the viewing subject rated the display correctly or made an error in the adjacent categories. Theory, Leary (1957), dictates that subjects will tend to misperceive interpersonal role presentation in that fashion. Therefore, the probability of a hit was 3/8 and the probability of a miss was 5/8. A binomial expansion was computed with $p = 3/8$ and $q = 5/8$ and with $n = 20$ for $(p + q)$, the exact probability of all possible combinations of the 20 possible outcomes of hits and misses was computed.

Table I about here

As can be seen from Table I, both model's portrayal of the eight interpersonal roles strongly supports our contention that not only can one describe nonverbal displays in terms of Leary's 1957 model but also naive students can be taught to accurately portray such interpersonal roles. Only the female model failed to accurately portray one interpersonal role nonverbally on both measures. That role was the (BC) role.

To determine whether our form of the Semantic Differential and the Interpersonal Check List was measuring the same thing a percent agreement score was computed in the York et al. 1988 study.

Table II about here

As can be seen from Table II, the Semantic Differential and

the interpersonal check list are measuring much the same thing (Percent agreement 71.1%).

York et al. (1988), York, Bedard, and Colindres (1984) and York, Scruggs and Shaker (1986) found no significant differences between male or female judges. To test for male, female differences two chi-square analyses were computed (White, 1985). Although the number of subjects was small, the fact that this finding is consistent over four studies suggests that once one is firmly committed to a particular interpersonal role whether one is male or female and whether those who view those roles are male or female fairly consistent and predictable responses occur.

Table III about here

As can be seen from Table III, there were no significant male/female differences in the responses of the twenty subjects with respect to the male and female role models.

Discussion

The results of the present study suggest that the extension of Leary's Circumplex Model (1957) to nonverbal behavioral displays may be of some importance. That naive subjects can be taught to nonverbally model these (Leary's) eight interpersonal roles with accuracy comparable to that of the first author suggests that the effect is not idiosyncratic. The failure of the female model to accurately portray the (BC) role is of some interest. In pilot work we found that female subjects often had trouble with the

portrayal of the (BC) role; an interpersonal role for which an appropriate metaphor might be "a loud mouthed good ol' boy". Perhaps women in our culture are discouraged from such interpersonal presentations. In any event, it seems reasonable from our results to use either Leary's Interpersonal Check List or our form of the Semantic Differential to analyze nonverbal behavior to determine interpersonal roles in naturalistic settings. It is our intention to conduct such research as a next step.

TABLE I

Probability That Subjects Responses (Misses) Could Have Occurred By Chance On Interpersonal Check List and Semantic Differential For Each Of Eight Eight Interpersonal Displays

Condition	Male Model	Female Model
AP	1 misses ICL**	4 misses ICL**
	1 misses S-D**	7 misses S-D*
NO	4 misses ICL**	2 misses ICL**
	2 misses S-D**	8 misses S-D N.S.
LM	4 misses ICL**	6 misses ICL**
	2 misses S-D**	12 misses S-D N.S.
JK	7 misses ICL*	7 misses ICL*
	5 misses S-D**	6 misses S-D**
HI	4 misses ICL**	4 misses ICL**
	7 misses S-D*	7 misses S-D*
FG	7 misses ICL*	7 misses ICL*
	6 misses S-D**	7 misses S-D*
DE	1 miss ICL**	3 misses ICL**
	3 misses S-D**	3 misses S-D**
BC	0 misses ICL**	10 misses ICL N.S.
	0 misses S-D**	10 misses S-D N.S.

Note - Conditions are described in the Method section.

**p $<$.01. *P $<$.05.

TABLE II

Percent Agreement Between Interpersonal Check List and Semantic Differential for Eights Interpersonal Roles

		Hit	Miss	Σ
Hit		198	40	238
Miss		49	33	87
	Σ	247	73	320

Percent Agreement = 71.1

TABLE III

Male And Female Subjects Hits on Interpersonal Check List and Semantic Differential Scales

	Male Role Model	Female Role Model
Interpersonal Check List		
Men	62	55
Women	70	65
	$\chi^2 < 1$, N.S.	
Semantic Differential		
Men	63	44
Women	71	56
	$\chi^2 < 1$, N.S.	

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